

9.
The CURSE causeless.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

E X O N,

Jan. 30th. 17¹⁶₁₇.

K Pierce

By *JAMES PEIRCE.*

Καὶ οὐκ ἐστὶν βλάσφημία ταῖς ἀγαθῇς, ἀπολογεῖσθαι τῷ Θεῷ,
ὃς δὲν ἔσται βλάσφημος ἀπ' ἐκείνων, ἀλλ' εἰς αὐτοὺς περὶ
πῶς εἶναι τὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης, τὰ ὅτι δυνάδων.

Chrysost. in Ps. cviii.

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The CURSUS

A
SERMON

PREACHED

ON

THE

BY JAMES PEARCE

OF THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, LONDON

IN THE YEAR 1784

AND SOLD BY



THE
P R E F A C E.



I will seem strange to some to meet with a Sermon of mine upon this occasion. I never could see reason to think the Sin of the day was a national one, that should oblige us to fast yearly so long a time after it. And the chief purposes to which 'tis generally apply'd, were never any encouragement to me to fast with them, or pay any religious regard to the day.

BUT it happen'd this year to fall on the day of our weekly Lecture, when it was my turn to preach. I thought therefore it would not be improper to say somewhat in our own vindication, at a time when we were every where insulted, and abus'd. The Sermon was compos'd and preach'd without the least intention of printing it ; but being earnestly desir'd by many of the hearers to let it appear in the world, I have given way to their importunity.





PROV. XXVI. 2.

*As the bird by wandering,
as the Swallow by flying;
so the Curse causeless shall
not come.*



IS the custom of his pretended Holiness, the Man of Sin, once a year to curse us, among the rest of those, whom he is pleas'd to count Heretics, in the most solemn manner, by Bell, Book, and Candle. I wish his example was follow'd by none but those of his own Church. But, alas! 'tis sad to observe, how addicted furious and angry men are to love cursing, rather than blessing; and with what pleasure some men thunder out their severe censures, and bitter imprecations, against their innocent neighbours. And did they scatter their fire-brands,

brands, arrows and death, only when they were in sport, and over their profane cups, and in their merry meetings, their impiety would be far less than 'tis, when they attempt to sanctify their malice, by bringing it into their worship, and venting it in the name of GOD himself. It has been for a long time the custom of many to fast this day in the year for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. And we, all of us, are generally represented as the vilest miscreants, and the abomination of GOD, with a design to inflame against us the hatred and vengeance of men. And in this case, when the foundations of justice and charity are over-turn'd, What shall the righteous do? Or, Where shall they seek for refuge and comfort, but in the providence of the great GOD, who keeps the ordering all events in his own hand; and who will not intrust men with an arbitrary distribution of all the Curses, they would be as glad to inflict, as they are to denounce? Vengeance belongs to him, and he will recompence. And there is no evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it. Neither the rash judgments, nor the false representations, nor the cruel imprecations and threatnings of angry men shall be able to hurt us, if we are secure of GOD's favour. A conscience void of offence

Heb. x. 30.

Amos iii.

6.

fence will make us easy in our expectation of a Blessing, when we are stunn'd with the loudest noise of Cursing. For, as *Solomon* asserts in the Text, *The Curse causeless shall not come.* 'Tis upon this clause of the *Verse* I intend to insist, for our encouragement and comfort on the present occasion. But the connexion of it with the former part of the *Verse* being obscure, and the latter clause having some ambiguity in it; I think it will be necessary to give some account, in the first place, of the general meaning of the words.

In the *Hebrew* there is often a difference between the Text and the Margin, the *Chebtib* and the *Keri* : and Translators take the liberty of following sometimes the one, and sometimes the other : and 'tis often hard to judge which is best, the *Jews* pretending both to be owing to the inspir'd Writers. Thus it is in the last clause of the Text, which, according to one reading of the Original, may be render'd thus: *So is the Curse causeless, it shall not come.* And according to the other reading, thus : *So is the Curse causeless, it shall come upon him* ; that is, upon the person, who without cause denounces it. Now the meaning of the former clause of the *Verse* will be different, according as we fix upon the one, or t'other reading

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reading of the latter. If we read it: *As the bird by wandering, as the Swallow by flying; so is the Curse causeless, it shall not come*: the sense will be this: That the Curse causeless is a wild and uncertain thing, as much at random, as the flying of a bird; that it as easily fly's over our heads without doing us any hurt, as a bird does; or, that it is as easily avoided by us, as a snare is by a bird that is upon the wing. But if we take the other reading of the Words: *As the bird by wandering, as the Swallow by flying; so is the Curse causeless, it shall come upon him*: the meaning will be: That, as a bird by wandering exposes it self to danger, so do's a man by causeless cursing of his neighbour, the mischief falls upon himself. And we may observe, the Wise Man represents elsewhere the nest, as a place of safety for a bird; and speaks of it expos'd to danger, by leaving and wandering from its nest: *As a bird that wandereth from her nest; so is a man that wandereth from his place*. Either of these senses is most just and true, and we need not be solicitous which to prefer. I confess the latter seems to me more agreeable to Solomon's use of the comparison here mention'd. But then that sense implies the other. For if the curse falls upon him, who denounces it; then it does not upon him, against whom 'tis denounced.

Prov. xxvii
8.

IN speaking therefore to the Text, I shall,

I. Inquire, when a Curse may be said to be causeless.

II. I shall shew you, that the Curse, with which we are ordinarily loaded on this day, is causeless.

III. I shall endeavour to set before you the comfort, which the Text holds forth to you; that this causeless Curse shall be mischievous, not to them who are cursed, but to the Curfers themselves.

I. I shall inquire, when a Curse may be said to be causeless? Now there are four cases, wherein a curse may be causeless.

1. When the pretended ground, or reason of the Curse, is something really good and just; or, however harmless and innocent, and so there is no occasion for any cursing at all. The Curse causeless is the Curse, which is undeserv'd; and certainly nothing can be more undeserv'd than a Curse, when a man's actions are such as merit commendation and praise.

2. The Curse is causeless, when tho' the occasion of it is evil, yet the evil is too inconsiderable to deserve such a Curse, as is denounc'd upon the account of it. There are degrees of evil, as well as good; and 'tis not a man's being sure there is evil in any action, that will justify him in passing the most severe and rigorous sentence upon him who is guilty of it. A Father, a Master, or a Magistrate would be very unjust, if he should punish every offence with equal severity. A proportion is always to be observ'd, and men are to be dealt with severely or mildly, according to the nature of the crime they have committed. And so far as the doom, or Curse men pronounce, exceeds the desert of the offence, so far is it without doubt causeless. Besides, the law of charity should teach us to make all the allowances we can, for those circumstances, which may alleviate persons guilt. Our common infirmities may, one would think, incline us to follow this rule. We often need ourselves those charitable constructions, which our neighbours expect we should put upon their actions. And it would be hard and causeless to curse a person, as doing that wilfully and maliciously, which he did thro' mistake or inadvertence. This in-

indeed can't be alledg'd in cases plainly and grossly evil, where every man's conscience must needs inform him : but without all question, great regard should be had to such circumstances in all intricate and disputable matters, wherein good men have been found to take both sides of the question.

3. The Curse is causeless, when the person against whom 'tis levell'd is innocent, and had no hand in the occasion of it, however grievously evil and wicked it was. For in this case, tho' the Curse may be deserv'd ; yet 'tis evident, 'tis not by him who is cursed. And men should be as careful to acquit the innocent, as they are to condemn the guilty.

4. Then is the Curse causeless, when the person who denounces it, is equally guilty with him, whom he curses. For whatever the crime is, yet he must with a very ill grace curse others for it, who has himself an equal share in the guilt. And he that curse another, for what he does himself, virtually curses himself. *Therefore Rom. ii. thou art inexcusable, o man, whosoever thou art that judgest : for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself ; for thou that judgest, dost the same things. And tho' the*

the Curse may not in this case be causeless in itself; yet it manifestly is so in the person, from whom it proceeds.

I suppose there can be no difficulty in perceiving the Curse is causeless in these several cases. I proceed therefore to the next Part of my Discourse,

II. To shew, that the Curse with which we are ordinarily loaded on this day is causeless; and that our Adversaries have no reason to abuse, revile, and condemn us, at the rate they do, upon this occasion. And here I need only consider, how applicable those several things already mention'd, which shew a Curse to be causeless, are to our case.

I. A great part of the matter of our charge, and the reason why we have such a heavy doom past upon us, is so far from being criminal, that it is truly noble, and deserves much praise and commendation. I speak now only of what was done by the Parliament, and those who join'd with them against the King, or rather against his evil Counsellors. As to what follow'd, when several of the Members were seclused, and a few only were suffer'd to be present, and give their Vote; I shall never reckon that to be the Parliament's Act. But a great
load

load is thrown upon us, for what was the Act of the Parliament, and all the troubles of that unhappy time are ordinarily laid at our door. But the troubles were really owing to those, who put the King upon invading the rights of his Subjects; and that brave Parliament is worthy of an honourable and everlasting remembrance, who stood up nobly in the defence of them. All the world must own, it properly belong'd to the Parliament to take notice of, and to redress such grievances, as the Nation then groan'd under. They are the fence and bulwark of our Civil Liberties, against the incroachments of an Arbitrary Power. The wisdom of our ancestors had provided, that Parliaments should have an opportunity of looking into, and redressing the Nation's grievances, by reserving to them the power of supplying the Prince with money. And when there was no such Law, as has been since made, for the frequent meeting of those Assemblies; there was no other way to secure to the Nation their privileges, but by a stiff defence of their right to refuse to part with their money, unless it was given in a Parliamentary way. 'Twas this began those troubles, and all the world must justify that Parliament, for standing up in defence of the right of the Subjects; and taking the opportunity to redress the mischiefs, which were
owing

owing to as corrupt and vile a Ministry, as ever had before harrafs'd the Nation. And doubtless, while the Parliament stood up in defence of the Subjects Liberties, it was the duty of the Subjects to stand by them and defend them. And to that noble Stand, that was then made in the days of our Forefathers, we are indebted, that we their Posterity are not a generation of Slaves to the Arbitrary Power of our Kings, and the lusts of such a vicious, fawning Clergy, which then carried all before them.

2. Supposing the proceedings of the Parliament, and the Nation (for I as yet meddle with no more) were in some respects evil and unjustifiable; yet were there such circumstances in their case, as must be allow'd to go a great way in excusing them, and should therefore lighten the censure men pass upon them. 'Tis indeed very hard for the best of men to manage a long quarrel, that rises to a considerable height, without deserving some blame. Tho' we allow, there were some things amiss in the conduct of those, who stood up for the Liberties of the People; yet every one must see, their end and design was very good, and that the methods they took were generally so too. And this will go a great way in excusing, even
when

when it will not wholly justify. If their jealousies and suspicions ran too high, and if the terms they stood upon seem to have been sometimes a little extravagant, let their circumstances be consider'd. They had seen what advances had been made to set up Tyranny, both in Church and State; they had the Massacre of 200000 of their Brethren in *Ireland* before their eyes, and the threatnings of the like usage were loud in their ears. And in such a case, Who can blame them, if they insisted upon an extraordinary security? If their suspicions were beyond the true designs of those they had to deal with, they may thank themselves who gave them too much reason to entertain them. Our Senators could not have been faithful in the trust their Country had lodg'd in them, if they had not done their utmost to secure the safety of the Nation. And if it was a fault, 'twas certainly a very pardonable one, that they thought it much better to lay a restraint upon the Power of the Prince, than to hazard the utter Ruin and destruction of the Community. And therefore, as to what was a national act, that is, what was then done by a free Parliament at that time, posterity should, and I doubt not in a little time will, judge more calmly and impartially concerning it; and not load as brave a set of men, as
ever

ever the Nation had, with their censures, for a conduct, which derives so many advantages and benefits to their successors.

3. 'Tis most evident, the Curse which is usually on this day denounc'd against us, is causeless; because we are perfectly innocent, and had no manner of hand in the pretended occasion of their cursing us. Let the transaction of the day be as black and horrid as they please to represent it, what is that to us? what reason have they to raise such an outcry against us upon the account? 'Tis now 68 years ago since the thing was done; and 'tis a question whether there be any person left in the Nation, who had directly, or indirectly, the least hand in the King's Death? Is it not then causeless, for them to run out with so much intemperance and extravagance in cursing us, for a matter of which we are wholly innocent, and which was transacted, if not before we were born, yet at least before we were capable of having any hand in it?

Obj. 1. BUT say they: If you had no hand in it, your Fathers had, and the Curse is due to you for your Fathers sins.

Ans.

Ans. THE putting the King to death was the act of a very few; and the families who can in this respect be concern'd in it cannot be many. The act was far from being national, but was committed by a *Juncto* of men, who oppress'd the Nation, and inflav'd the Parliament. And tho' they don't care to own it, yet they know very well, that the Leaders of the People, the * Ministers at that time, earnestly, and with the hazard of their all in this world, openly protested against the fact, to the very face of them who did it. One would think, they who pretend to embalm the memory of that King, should treat those, who appear'd his friends at that time, with somewhat more of decency. If they were not able to save the King from death, yet they shew'd their good will to do it; and when they could do no more, thro' the domineering power of a few, they heartily protested against it, when we could tell them, who stood by without speaking a word in his behalf.

Obj. 2. HOWEVER say they, tho' you had not personally a hand in that fact, your principles are the same with theirs who had, you

* See Vindicat. of the Ministers of the Gospel in and about London, 1648.

are all of you for destroying Kings, and will gladly do it upon every opportunity, and therefore we justly charge you with the wickedness, and curse you for it.

Ans. 'Tis very much, I confess, we should have such bad principles as they charge us with, and not know it: and that they should be better able to tell us what our principles are, than we can tell ourselves. Tho' such bold assertions may delude their easy followers, who receive them with an implicit faith, yet certainly it must be very hard for them to convince us, or indeed, any indifferent persons, that we don't know our own principles. If the law of the land has establish'd them as a Church; yet I suppose neither that, nor the law of God, has establish'd 'em as Inquisitors and searchers of mens hearts. This pretence of the badness of our principles, with respect to civil Government, has been artfully play'd against us. Our Schools have been represented as dangerous, and not to be allow'd. And who can doubt they must be so, if what they say be true? For why may not a man as well be suppos'd to teach, as to hold, base principles, without knowing any thing of the matter? But if these Inquisitors will condescend to us so far, as to give us leave to know our own principles,

ples, and allow us to be able to give a more faithful account of them, than they can do for us; we do not doubt to justify our principles against all the senseless clamours of those, who would run us down.

WE think it then our duty to live peaceably and quietly under that Government, which the providence of GOD, and the Laws of the land have set over us: that we are bound to be subject to it, and according to our stations to maintain it, so long as it answers its true end, without troubling ourselves about the particular form of it. If we don't believe the unalienable indefeasible Right, or the *jus divinum* of Kings, and an arbitrary Government, they may thank themselves for it; since they never produce any sufficient Charter for it, while they pretend to have one. In short, we distinguish between Kings and Tyrants; those who make the good of their People, and those who make their own pleasure, the rule of their administration. The former we think ourselves bound in conscience to obey; and the latter we should think we were great fools, if we did not to our power withstand and resist. Such are our principles, that no good King need, or ever did, distrust us: and we count it not a dishonour to us, that bad ones are always jealous of us; and we wish our Adversaries

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faries did not, by endeavouring always to improve the jealousy of such, convince the world they are the only ones for their turn. If we don't complement our Princes with the promise of obedience without reserve ; yet we think ourselves bound to be subject to them in all civil things, while they make the Laws of the land their standard. And as to our consciences in religious matters, we protest 'tis, and hope it ever will be our principle, to keep them sacred to the direction of a higher and greater Prince, who alone has a right to prescribe to them. And he must be a bad Prince with a witness, who will not be content with our rendring to him the things that are his ; or, who will not allow us to render unto GOD the things that are GOD's.

As to kingly Government in particular, we are unreasonably charg'd to be enemies to it. Men may fancy one Government to be more perfect than another, and the world has always been divided in their speculations upon that head ; but I believe we are all in general pleas'd with, and thankful to GOD for, such a Monarchy as ours, which is so limited by the Laws. So that we are perfectly innocent in the matter, for which our adversaries are so very free in cursing of us.

4. THE Curse which they denounce against us is causeless, since they who denounce it, are themselves the most guilty. I don't now run back to transactions, wherein neither we, nor they had any hand. I consider what is fresh in all our memories. Rebellion is the pretended occasion of the charge brought against us, and the High Generation are the managers of it, who take upon them very solemnly to read our doom. But have they not now for ever stopt their own mouths? Will they blame us for standing up for our Liberties, when we had the Parliament, one part of the Legislature, on our side; and yet think themselves innocent in inviting over the Prince of Orange, to rescue their Liberties, when they acted only in a private capacity? If the rights of Kings are so unalienable, if their persons are so sacred, that they can never be resisted, but upon pain of that damnation which they thunder out against us on this occasion; What must become of them, who invited a Prince to drive away K. *James*, and join'd with him afterward in waging a war to keep him out? According to their notions, there was not a sword drawn, or a pistol fir'd against K. *James* in *Ireland*, but what was a lifting up the hand against the Lord's anointed, and as truly a
con-

conspiring his death, as any thing they were ever guilty of, who actually put his Father to death.

BUT to come yet nearer: Who were they that hatch'd the late Rebellion, that took up arms against the best of Kings, and that fought in the open field against him? Were any of those, they have been so long cursing as enemies to kingly Government, and as Rebels against all Kings; were any of those their associates? Who were the Generals, the Soldiers, or the Chaplains, in the rebellious Host? They cannot pretend, that his Majesty, King GEORGE, had no right to the Crown; we have their oaths to the contrary: and if we may not believe them when they are upon their oaths, I can't see why we should much regard what they say at any other time.

WHEN therefore these men, according to their usual Cant, reproach you with Sedition and Rebellion; request them, that they would please to explain themselves, Whether they mean, those of *Oxford, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol*, and other places they have made too many to be mention'd? Or, Whether they mean those of *Preston and Dumblain*? Desire them to oblige you with the names of the *Presbyterian* Ministers, Justices, Generals, Captains, and other Officers; the *Presbyterian* Soldiers, or Mobs, that appear'd or acted
upon

upon any of these Occasions. They will soon be weary, if they attempt to give you the characters of the actors in that villany; unless they will deny it to be such, because 'tis sanctify'd by the Church, for whose sake they pretend it was design'd.

IF, according to their usual custom, they twit you with 1641, without asking them, Whether they mean the murdering 200000 Protestants by their good friends in *Ireland*; you may tell them, You need not be at the trouble of going half so far back as 1641, to meet with 1715, or 1688; and that the Church of *England* has, in these two latter, more than equal'd all that the *Presbyterians* did in the former.

SINCE then these very men are so notoriously guilty of that crime, for which they pretend to condemn us; the cursing us must needs be causeless as to them, if we had actually deserv'd it; as I have shewn you we have not. And they, of all men in the world, have the least reason to make such an outcry as they do, with the infamous *Athaliah*: *Treason, treason.* ^{2 Kings xi. 14.} But 'tis time for me to hasten to the last general Head of my Discourse.

III. AND I hope I have now, by shewing you, that the Curse against you is causeless, prepar'd

prepar'd you to receive the comfort which the Text may afford you : which is according to the different readings, either, *it shall not come* ; or, *it shall come upon him* that denounces it, and be most mischievous to himself. There is so much of reason and truth in either reading, that 'tis hard to tell which is to be preferr'd, and therefore I shall briefly speak to both.

I. **THE CURSE** causeless shall not come upon the persons, at whom it is levell'd. And if this be true, and we are sure we are innocent, we need not much distress ourselves, whatever the treatment is we meet with at the hands of our enemies. They may revile and abuse us, and say all manner of evil falsely against us ; but this shall not really turn to our prejudice. And to evidence this, consider,

(I.) **THAT GOD** has not left it in the power of such persons to execute the sentences, they are pleas'd to pass upon others ; or, the designs and purposes they have laid against them. They are often ready to flatter themselves into an opinion of their own power, and to be confident of the success of their own projects ; that they shall be able to wreck their malice upon their enemies, and to make them as miserable, as they would wish them to be.

be. But, as they are not bless'd, whom they bless ; so, neither are they cursed, whom they curse. There is a supreme LORD over them, and all their designs, who will not suffer them to proceed according to their hearts lust, but directs all with a different view. He makes *the wrath of man to praise him*, ps. lxxvi. and whatever is over and above that, *he re-* ^{10.}

strains. He disappoints such, when they seem to think themselves nearest to the execution of their purposes, and when they are most confident of crushing the objects of their hatred and spite. Thus it has been seen of old, and thus have we seen in the city of our GOD. Let it be recorded for the generation to come, that they may remember, and praise, and trust in the LORD.

(2.) As they have it not in their power, to make whom they please cursed; so neither does a holy and righteous GOD regard their Curse, to execute it. GOD is indeed a GOD of recompences; but where the Curse is causeless, and undeserved, his justice no way obliges him to fulfil it. If the Curse causeless takes effect, it must be thro' the power of those from whom it proceeds, which we see it cannot; or else thro' the vengeance of GOD, in answer to their desires. But there can be no reason to be afraid upon any such account.

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GOD

GOD hears not sinners, and he who has made love, charity, and forgiveness, so essential to true religion, cannot be thought to be pleased with the wrath, malice, and cruelty of angry men, or to delight to execute all their rash and hasty judgments. We need not therefore distress ourselves, when we know that profane men curse us, or wish our confusion in their cups; no, nor when 'tis done with more gravity and solemnity, and religion itself is prostituted, to set off envy and malice to the greater advantage. GOD is too much displeased with a censorious, damning humour, ever to do any thing to gratify it.

(3.) 'Tis a sure evidence that the Curse causeless shall not come, since a good GOD has, by his promise, secur'd us a Blessing instead of it. GOD is the patron of the innocent and oppressed; and the more any are abused and run down wrongfully, the greater is his compassion and favour toward them. GOD will not have fellowship with the workers of iniquity, nor take part with them in their spite: so far is he from this, that he has made this very treatment an argument of their blessedness. *Blessed are ye, says Christ, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward*

*Matt. v.
11, 12.*

reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you. The best of men, who have gone before us, have met with the like usage. Nay, which is much greater, the Son of God himself was thus treated. He, as well as his followers, was traduced as a seditious person, and used with the utmost spite and malignity. But those who were cursed of men, were reckon'd by God to be blessed, and actually were blessed in his favour. And God's favour and love is a security of blessedness to his people, in spite of all the ill will and malevolent designs of their enemies. Observe how God speaks concerning the enemies of his people: *They hired Balaam, the Son of Beor of Pether of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.* *Dent. xxiii. 4, 5.* *Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam: but the Lord thy God turned the Curse into a Blessing, because the Lord thy God loved thee.* God made the wretch, that intended a Curse, to pronounce a Blessing; and the more forward men were to curse them, the more inclined God was to bless them. And the very Curse of the wicked is sometimes a Blessing and an advantage. For when their wickedness is brought to light, and has render'd them odious and abominable: 'tis natural for men to apprehend, there must be a more than ordinary goodness in those, who are the objects of such men's greatest hatred. And the

most angry of our Adversaries, I hope, will not be displeas'd with us, if we observe and admire the steps of divine providence, in this respect, toward ourselves.

2. THE Curse causeless, according to the other reading, shall come upon him ; that is, shall recoil upon the Author. The greatest mischief it does, is to him, out of whose mouth it proceeds.

AND this cannot be thought strange, since the Curse causeless is a palpable wickedness. And who is most hurt by any wickedness, but *Prov. viii.* the person who commits it? *He that sins*
 36. *against God, wrongs his own soul.* By this, as well as all other wickedness, men provoke the anger of the Almighty ; and that is, of all others, the most dreadful curse. And I may further add, that this is a very aggravated wickedness, and therefore may the rather be supos'd likely to fall heavy upon them, who are guilty of it,

THE thing is not only contrary to a gospel temper, and a true christian spirit ; but is likewise a most daring invasion of the prerogative of the heavenly King ; which must be most notorious in those, who pretend, above all men, to be tender of, and jealous for, the prerogative of earthly Kings.

Rash

Rash, and censorious judging, is a bold aspiring to his prerogative of searching the hearts of men : and Christ has warn'd men, what to expect in this case : *Judge not, that ye be Matth. vii. not judged. For with what judgment ye judge,^{1, 2.} ye shall be judged ; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* So that our Saviour himself has determin'd the case, that the Curse causeless, the harsh and cruel sentences men pass upon their neighbours, shall be executed upon themselves.

AND this is further an invading GOD's prerogative, in as much as 'tis a taking vengeance out of GOD's hand into mens own. *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will Heb. x. 30. recompence.* But when men become thus daring, GOD may convince them of their error, and satisfy them, to whom vengeance belongs, to their cost. And all the world must own, there is a righteousness in the procedure, when men are dealt with according to the verdict they pass upon their neighbours. What more just, than that he should *have judgment without mercy, that hath Jam. ii. 13. shewed no mercy ?* And that such a sentence should take place : *As he loved cursing, so let Psal. cxix. it come unto him : as he delighted not in blessing,^{17, 18.} so let it be far from him : As he clothed himself with cursing, like as with his garment ; so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil*

oil into his bones. And very applicable here
 Rem. ii. 3. are the words of the Apostle: *And thinkest
 thou this, O man, that judgest them that do
 such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt
 escape the judgment of God? God is known,*
 Ps. ix. 16. *says the Psalmist, by the judgment which he
 executeth: the wicked is snared by the work of
 his own hands.*

AND certainly the conduct of divine providence has been very admirable in our time; we have seen the men, who were so zealous in asserting the doctrines of Passive Obedience and Non-resistance, and in damning such as oppos'd them; we have lived, I say, to see them forc'd to renounce both the principle and practice, and take up arms in defence of their Liberties, when they were themselves attack'd. And for their acting thus at the Revolution, if the thing be consider'd abstractly from their before avow'd principles, I am far from blaming them. But if there was any edge in the severe sentences they us'd to pass, 'tis evident from that time it became turn'd against themselves. We have seen the men, who doom'd us as Rebels to destruction in this world, and the pit of hell in the world to come; them, I say, even them, have we seen left, by a just and righteous God, to act the Rebels in the open field, against a
 Government

Government, which had never given them the least cause of complaint; and which they themselves, in the solemnest manner, had testify'd to be rightful and just.

AND now, what shall we say, but that the Curse causeless is come upon the Curser?

Behold he travaileth with iniquity, and hath Psal vii. conceiv'd mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 14. &c.

He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

I HAVE but a few things to add briefly concerning our Duty on this occasion.

I. WHEN we observe this conduct of providence, it should excite our praise and thanksgiving. So the Psalmist, upon his having mention'd the wicked falling into the mischief they intended for others, in the Psalm just now referr'd to, immediately adds: *I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness, (there is a righteousness in the procedure, that well deserves to be the subject of our praise) and will sing praise unto the Name of the Lord most high. When the enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will* *Exod xv. 9, 10, 11.* *divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them; but GOD blew upon them with his wind,*

wind, and confounded them: then Moses and the Children of Israel celebrated it with a song; then they extoll'd him as beyond compare: Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods! who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! There is a charming beauty in the course of providence, that calls often for our admiration and praise. God often displays his righteousness, in overruling the sins of men to the accomplishment of his own purposes; and his justice is display'd in his letting wicked instruments, by wicked methods, bring about a terrible vengeance. And these works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious; and his righteousness endureth for ever. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembred. And therefore well may I say with the Psalmist, in the first verse of that Psalm: Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.

*Psal. cxi.
2, 3, 4.*

2. WE may from hence satisfy ourselves of the reasonableness of our bearing such treatment with patience. Our Enemies are not able to take the least step without the divine permission. They are limited in every thing they attempt, and would set about. However
they

they may curse us causelessly, yet they cannot inflict their own Curse; and since the Curse causeless does not take effect upon those, against whom 'tis design'd, there can be little reason for our being very much disturb'd and disquieted by it? 'Tis indeed provoking to a person, to be so treated, when he has given no occasion for it, and it may be some trouble; but the trouble is more easy to be born, than many others. And 'tis a sign we are little acquainted with the great duty of self-denial, and the bearing the cross, if we cannot take patiently such reproachful language. If we cannot bear hard words, how shall we resist unto blood? Besides, as they are not able, at their own pleasure, to inflict their causeless Curse, so neither can they so much as curse, without a divine permission. And if we consider the trouble, as under God's ordering, there is the more reason to bear it patiently; as *David* did, when cursed by *Simei*: *Let him curse, because the Lord* 2 Sam. xvi. *said unto him, Curse David. Who then* 10. *shall say, wherefore hast thou done so?* And the rather may we bear it patiently, since such treatment has been the lot of good men in all ages. *David* I mention'd, and *Jeremy* Jer. xv. 10. complains, that tho' he had given them no cause, yet every one of the people did curse him.

E him.

him. And the thing is most notorious in the Apostles, and especially in our LORD himself.

3. WE may hence be directed in our conduct toward them. We have more reason to pity them, than to be intrag'd by them. Poor souls! little do they think, what they are doing, when they are causelessly cursing their neighbours. They will not be able to do us a thousandth part of the hurt, which without fail they do themselves. We have no need to return them their own usage. They will have enough of their own cursing, and need no addition of ours. Let us then follow the direction of our LORD;

Matth. v.
44.

But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. Our business is to pity, and pray for them, that the Curse they imprecate upon others, may, by their timely repentance, be prevented from ever falling upon themselves.

4. LET us hence learn our duty to trust in GOD, and be the more careful to perform it. We ought to trust in him, to keep us from the mischief our enemies would be glad to see fall upon us. Thus *David* encourag'd him.

himself in the LORD his GOD, when Shi-
 mei curs'd him : *It may be the Lord will look* ^{2Sam. xvli.}
upon my affliction, and that the Lord will requite ^{12.}
me good for his cursing this day. Let their malice
 drive us to our refuge, and make us the more
 confident in our prayers to GOD for his
 Blessing. The more sincerely and heartily
 we trust in him, the more easy we may well
 be : for this is a certain method of turning
 their Curse to an advantage. And therefore
 let us say with David : *Let them curse, but* ^{Psal. cxix.}
bles thou. ^{28.}

F I N I S.



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